

NORTHWEST CORRIDOR PROJECT
EVALUATION OF TOLLING EFFECTS
ON LOW-INCOME POPULATIONS
TECHNICAL REPORT
2014 Addendum

PREPARED FOR:

Federal Highway Administration
And

Georgia Department of Transportation

PREPARED BY:

Parsons Brinckerhoff

HNTB Corporation

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Executive Summary

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) propose to make transportation improvements to Interstate 75 (I-75) and Interstate 575 (I-575) in the Atlanta metropolitan area. A Record of Decision (ROD) was issued for the project on May 23, 2013. This technical report addendum includes an analysis of the proposed changes in design since the ROD was approved to evaluate whether the previous decisions remain valid.

This report is a reevaluation of the Environmental Justice (EJ) analysis presented in the Northwest Corridor Project, Evaluation of Tolling Effects on Low-Income Populations (HNTB Corporation, 2013) due to refinements to the design of the Northwest Corridor Project.

The previous analysis concluded that the implementation of new, tolled capacity is anticipated to generate adverse, but not disproportionately high impacts to the low-income community. Tolling inherently imposes an impact on all populations, including the EJ populations, which choose to use the tolled managed lanes. The general purpose, non-tolled option that is available today may continue to be available in the future and as a result of the construction of the adjacent tolled managed lanes facility, the general purpose lanes may realize travel time benefits.

The project design refinements have been analyzed and the previous conclusion remains valid.

Introduction:

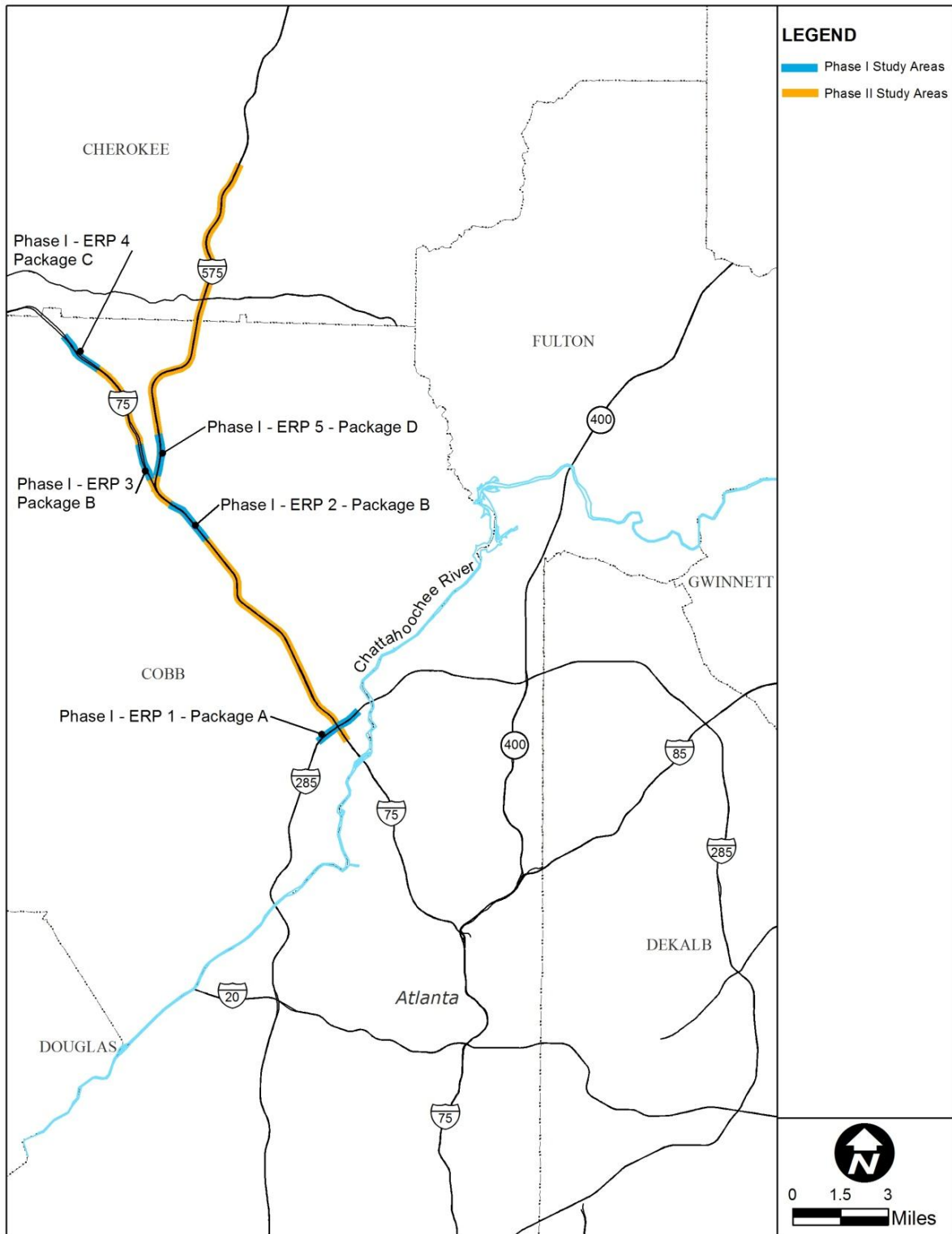
The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) propose to make transportation improvements to Interstate 75 (I-75) and Interstate 575 (I-575) in the Atlanta metropolitan area. The improvements are collectively referred to as the Northwest Corridor Project. In October 2011, the *Northwest Corridor Project, Final Environmental Impact Statement* (FEIS) (FHWA and GDOT, 2011) was published. In March 2013, a reevaluation of the analysis in the FEIS was completed. Following that reevaluation, a ROD was issued for the project on May 23, 2013. This report is a reevaluation of the Evaluation of Tolling Effects on Low-Income Populations presented in the *Northwest Corridor Project*, due to refinements to the design of the Northwest Corridor Project.

Project Description

The project is a design, build, finance (DBF) project and has been procured as a public-private partnership (P3). As part of the design-build process, the P3 Developer (Northwest Express Roadbuilders [NWER]) has identified five areas for initial Phase I construction (see Figure 1-1). On the construction phasing plan, these areas are identified as:

- Phase I Early Roadway Package (ERP) 1 – Package A (I-285 / I-75 Interchange Area)
- Phase I ERP 2 – Package B (Canton Road / I-75 Interchange Area)
- Phase I ERP 3 – Package B (Barrett Parkway / I-75 Interchange Area)
- Phase I ERP 4 – Package C (Hickory Grove Road / I-75 Area)
- Phase I ERP 5 – Package D (I-575 Corridor Area)

Figure 1-1. Project Location Phase I Study Areas



Changes in the design in these five areas are described in the paragraphs below.

Phase I ERP 1 – I-285 / I-75 Interchange Area

This package covers the I-75/I-285 interchange area from the beginning of the project on I-285 west of South Cobb Parkway east along I-285 to approximately 2,700 feet north of the I-285/Cumberland Boulevard overpass. This package also includes the ramps connecting the I-75 managed lanes to I-285. This package does not include any design and construction on I-75 in this area.

Phase I ERP 2 – Canton Road / I-75 Interchange Area

This package covers I-75 from just north of Allgood Road to just north of Bells Ferry Road.

Design changes covered by this package are within the original project boundaries studied in the 2013 Addendum. None of the design changes require the acquisition of additional right-of-way.

The design changes consist of a slight shift of the managed lanes eastward in the vicinity of the Georgia Northeastern Railroad and in the vicinity of Dickson Road.

Phase I ERP 3 – Barrett Parkway / I-75 Interchange Area

This package covers I-75 from just north of the existing I-575 southbound ramp to I-75 over I-75 northward to just north of Barrett Parkway.

Design changes covered by this package are within the original project boundaries studied in the 2013 Addendum. None of the design changes require the acquisition of additional right-of-way.

In this package, the I-75 managed lane is on the west side of I-75 instead of in the median as shown in the 2013 Addendum and transitions to the median just south of Barrett Parkway.

Phase I ERP 4 – Hickory Grove Road / I-75 Area

This package covers I-75 from just north of Wade Green Road northward to the end of the project just south of Woodstock Road.

Design changes covered by this package are within the original project boundaries studied in the 2013 Addendum. None of the design changes require the acquisition of additional right-of-way.

In this package, the relocation of the I-75 northbound entrance ramp from Wade Green Road occurs approximately 500 feet north of Wade Green Road rather than approximately 1,250 feet south of Hickory Grove Road. The I-75 managed lane ramp on the east side of the I-75 southbound lanes starts approximately 1,600 feet north of Hickory Grove Road instead of approximately 2,900 feet north of Hickory Grove Road.

Phase I ERP 5 – I-575 Corridor Area

This package covers I-575 from north of the I-75/I-575 split northward to just south of Noonday Creek. There are no proposed design changes in this package.

Phase II Project Description

This project is a Design, Build, Finance (DBF) project and has been procured as a Public-Private Partnership (P3). As part of the design-build process, the P3 Developer has identified five areas for Phase 2 construction (see Figure 1-2). On the Developer's construction phasing plan, these areas are identified as:

- Phase II Roadway Package A
- Phase II Roadway Package B1
- Phase II Roadway Package B2
- Phase II Roadway Package C
- Phase II Roadway Package D

Changes in design in these five areas are summarized below.

Phase II Roadway Package A

This package covers from the beginning of the project on I-75 south of I-285 through the I-75/I-285 interchange area to just north of Delk Road. As shown on the construction phasing plan (Figure 1), Phase II Roadway Package A overlaps Phase I Early Roadway Package (ERP) 1- Package A, which is focused on the construction associated with I-285 through the I-75/I-285 interchange, and extends to Phase II Roadway Package B1, which adjoins it to the north. This package includes the ramps connecting I-75 to the managed lanes and the managed lane interchange at Terrell Mill Road.

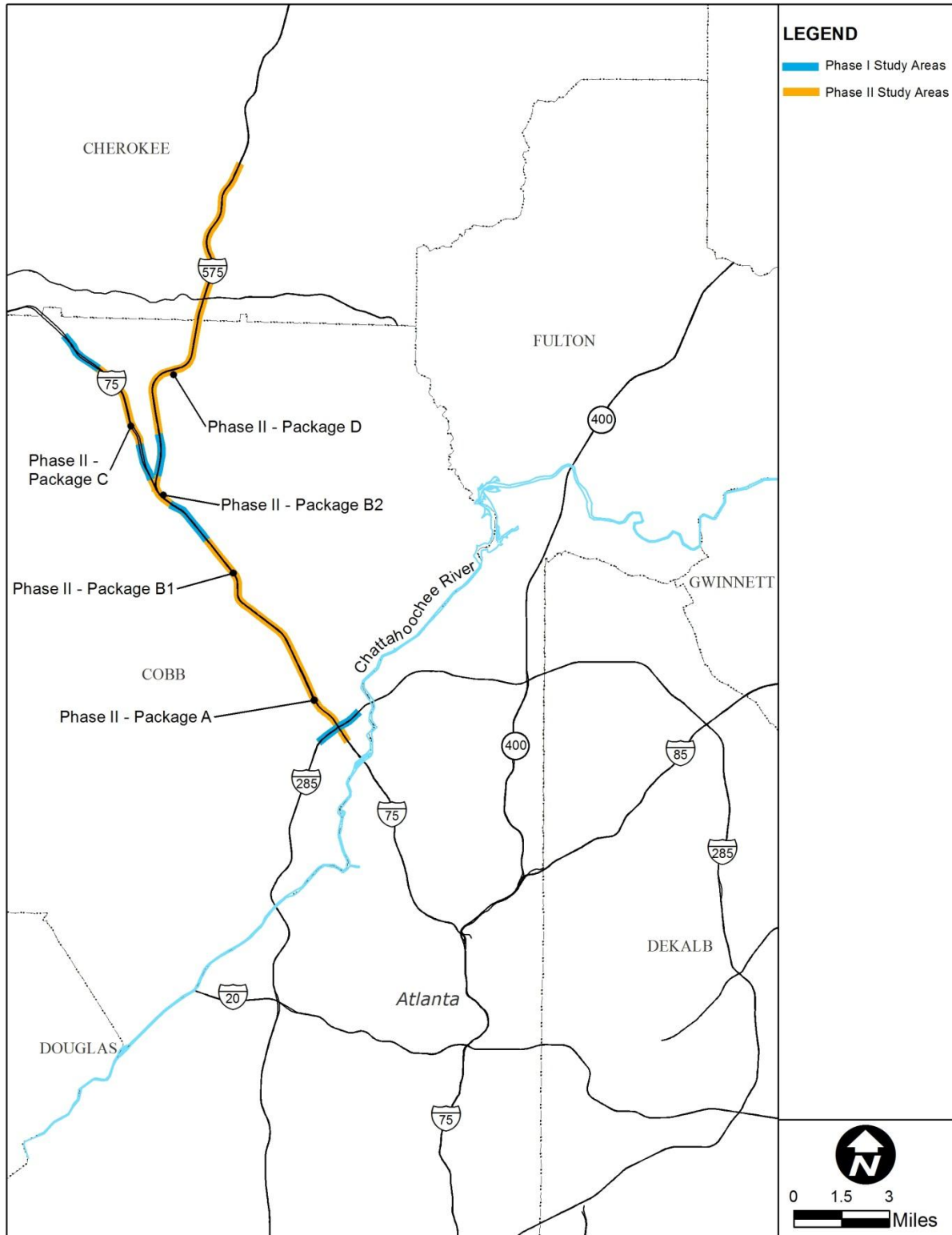
Design changes covered by this package are within the original project boundaries studied in the FEIS Reevaluation and Record of Decision (ROD) and do not require the acquisition of additional right-of-way.

This package does not include any design and construction on I-285 itself in this area. Those are part of Phase I, which is scheduled to begin construction in August 2014. This package completes the construction identified in Phase I ERP 1- Package A by constructing the I-75 improvements for the I-75/I-285 interchange modifications as well as the managed lane ramp bridges over I-285. The approaches were constructed in Phase I.

Changes in this package include:

- Modifications to the flyover ramps connecting the managed lanes to I-75 and I-285.
- Change in configuration of the managed lanes between Windy Ridge Parkway and Windy Hill Road including taking the managed lanes under Windy Hill Road and reconstructing the existing Windy Hill Road ramps in the northwest quadrant of the interchange.
- Shifting the southbound general purpose lanes of I-75 to the east to utilize the existing grass median between the northbound and southbound lanes.

Figure 1-2. Project Location Phase II Study Areas



Phase II Roadway Package B1

Phase II Roadway Package B1 is between Phase II Roadway Package A, which adjoins it to the south and Phase I ERP 2-Package B, which adjoins it to the north. The package covers I-75 from just north of Delk Road to just north of Allgood Road and includes the managed lane interchange at SR3 Connector / Roswell Road.

Design changes covered by this package are within the original project boundaries studied in the FEIS Reevaluation and ROD except for the acquisition of additional right-of-way of less than one acre on the west side of I-75 just north of South Marietta Parkway.

Changes in this package include:

- Minor shifts of the managed lanes closer to the general purpose lanes.
- A minor shift in the managed lanes to the west in the vicinity of the southbound exit ramp from I-75 to South Marietta Parkway and a minor shift in the alignment of the southbound general purpose ramp as it leaves southbound I-75 and ties into South Marietta Parkway.
- Shorter managed lane exit ramp from the managed lanes north of SR 3 Connector/Roswell Road to SR 3 Connector/Roswell Road.
- No reconstruction of the Gresham Road overpass over I-75.
- Shift of the managed lanes at North Marietta Parkway from the west side of the I-75 southbound general purpose lanes to the west side of the general purpose ramps to/from North Marietta Parkway.

Phase II Roadway Package B2

Phase II Roadway Package B2 is between Phase I ERP 2-Package B, which adjoins it to the south, and Phase I ERP 3-Package B, which adjoins it to the north. The package covers I-75 from just south of Bells Ferry Road to just north of the existing I-575 ramp over I-75 and on I-575 north of the interchange with I-75 southbound eastward approximately 2,000 feet. This package includes the managed lane I-75/I-575 interchange.

Design changes covered by this package are within the original project boundaries studied in the FEIS Reevaluation and ROD and do not require the acquisition of additional right-of-way.

Changes in this package include:

- Shifting the managed lanes from the median, as shown in the FEIS Reevaluation and ROD, west to the west side of the southbound I-75 general purpose lanes.
- Shifting the managed lane ramp between I-75 and I-575 to the west along the inside of the existing general purpose ramp from southbound I-575 to southbound I-75.
- Elimination of the reconstruction of I-75 through the I-75 / I-575 interchange.
- Elimination of the reconstruction of the I-575 ramp from I-75 northbound to I-575 northbound.

Phase II Roadway Package C

Phase II Roadway Package C is between Phase I ERP 3-Package B, which adjoins it to the south, and Phase I ERP 4-Package C, which adjoins it to the north. The package covers I-75

from just north of Barrett Parkway to just north of Wade Green Road. This package includes the managed lane interchange at Big Shanty Road.

Changes in this package include:

- Shifting the location of the managed lanes interchange and associated ramps to the west at Big Shanty Road.

Phase II Roadway Package D

Phase II Roadway Package D adjoins Phase I ERP 5-Package D, to the south. The package covers I-575 from north of Barrett Parkway to the end of the project south of Sixes Road. This package includes the north and southbound slip ramps connecting the managed lanes with the I-575 general purpose lanes.

Design changes covered by this package are within the original project boundaries studied in the FEIS Reevaluation and ROD and do not require the acquisition of additional right-of-way.

Changes in this package include:

- Change in locations of emergency access.
- Minor changes at Ridgewalk Parkway and south of Sixes Road associated with as-built conditions after recent projects at both locations.

Evaluation of Proposed Changes

The previous report evaluated the effect of tolls on low-income populations by using a comparison of travel savings, projecting usage through a model exercise to project potential origin and destination, and describing the potential acceptance in this corridor compared to the I-85 HOV to HOT Conversion Project.

The previous technical memorandum included travel time savings information comparing general purpose and the proposed tolled managed lanes. The travel times in the Traffic Technical Report 2014 Addendum are the same as those reported in the 2013 Addendum since there have been no changes in either traffic volume or capacity on the facility. Therefore, the information included in the previous technical memorandum remains valid. Since the model data remains unchanged, the origin and destination data and conclusions remain valid. The first priced managed lane project in the Atlanta region was the I-85 HOV to HOT Conversion Project, which opened in September 2011. Data available from the State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA) shows that the average daily toll rate was \$2.12 and the average daily trips on the facility was 426,807 vehicles per day for February 2014. The number of PeachPasses has increased from 76,385 before this facility opened to 270,564 as of February 2014 and shows a steady increase over this period. There seems to be an acceptance of the I-85 HOV to HOT project indicated by the number of transponder acquisitions and the toll rate increases, which are an indication of system demand. However, there are limitations on the availability of this data regarding the individual trips and demographics of individual system users.

Based on this limited data, there continues to be a need to study acceptance of these types of facilities and an ongoing need for outreach and education to reach EJ populations to understand

their usage and particular needs when it comes to priced managed lanes on specific corridors as well as in the region.

Environmental Commitments

The ROD included the following commitments:

- Annual surveys of users over a three-year period to be conducted; dissemination of monitoring information on SRTA and GDOT websites. While the data gathered from these surveys may not enable near-term mitigation with this particular toll project, it will be available to assist in making decisions about any future toll- related projects that may be studied in the future.
- Cash based and cash-preferred customer solutions will be implemented to facilitate toll lane access to those who may need or prefer to purchase Peach Pass accounts with cash and in person rather than online and with a credit card. These cash based and cash preferred customer solutions will also entail providing additional locations for Peach Pass purchase, including retail outlets. In addition, minimum required initial values and re-load amounts for the Peach Pass will occur. Finally, the transaction cost associated with reloading the card will be set to minimize the financial impact to cash based and cash-preferred customers.

The environmental commitment in the ROD to conduct annual surveys over a three-year period remains valid. The cash based system has been adopted in SRTA's operational procedures. GDOT and SRTA are committed to monitoring and exploring ways to understand the needs of the low-income populations.

Conclusions

The previous analysis concluded that the implementation of new, tolled capacity is anticipated to generate adverse, but not disproportionately high impacts to the low-income community. Tolling inherently imposes an impact on all populations, including the EJ populations, which choose to use the tolled managed lanes. The general purpose, non-tolled option that is available today may continue to be available in the future and as a result of the construction of the adjacent tolled managed lanes facility, the general purpose lanes may realize travel time benefits.

The project design refinements have been analyzed and the previous conclusion remains valid.